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East Timor

* The people of East Timor have lived in constant fear since the territory was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. At least 200,000 East Timorese have died since the invasion as a result of war, famine and unlawful killings. Both peaceful and armed supporters of East Timorese independence are at risk of extra-judicial killings, "disappearance", arbitrary arrest and torture. The new leadership can demonstrate its commitment to human rights by putting an end to the repression which has caused such suffering in EastTimor and discredited the New Order Government internationally. In the longer term it must set up investigations into past human rights violations and ensure that those found to be responsible are brought to justice.

* AI hopes that a change in leadership will bring a speedy end to the suffering of the people of East Timor. President Suharto has himself been closely identified with the issue having overseen the invasion and sanctioned over 20 years of repression in the territory. Quite apart from the suffering of the people of East Timor, Indonesia's image abroad has been badly tarnished by the on-going unlawful killings, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary arrests. It is hoped that a new leader with less of a personal investment in East Timor and a greater commitment to human rights may have the will to find a solution.

* Not only has East Timor been costly in terms of Indonesia's international image but also in financial terms. Enormous resources have been invested over the years in maintaining such a large military presence in the territory which have been responsible for appalling human rights violations. It has to be questioned whether, in the current economic conditions, Indonesia can afford to keep the high numbers of troops in the territory.

* The international community has an important role to play at this critical moment. Talks between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the UN Secretary General have yielded little in terms of concrete results despite being given a higher priority since Kofi Anan took over as Secretary General. The possibilities for change and reform which now exist in Indonesia brings renewed hope that the East Timor question can finally be resolved. The international community must capitalise on this moment to press for concrete improvements to the human rights situation on the ground and ensure that any discussions of the political future of East Timor have human rights concerns as the centre.

Indonesian Asylum-seekers

* in the current atmosphere of uncertainty Indonesians, particularly those from vulnerable groups such as ethnic-Chinese Indonesians, are leaving the country. If the level of repression increases or further civil disturbances occur it is likely that the numbers of people wishing to leave will rise. Foreign governments, particularly Indonesia's immediate neighbours, are clearly worried about an influx of people from Indonesia and it is therefore in their interest to pressure the Indonesian government to respect the human rights of it citizens and to introduce reforms that would guarantee this protection in the future. In the meantime foreign governments are obliged to adhere to internationally accepted standards on refugees in particular they must

* ensure that all asylum-seekers fleeing the current crisis in Indonesia should not be at risk of being turned around at the borders of other nations;

* ensure that all asylum-seekers from Indonesia are given access to fair and proper asylum procedures;

* take into account the current instability in dealing with any claims from Indonesia . In particular, countries should take into account the fact that in the current turmoil, the Indonesian Armed Forces may not be in a position to ensure the safety of vulnerable groups, such as the ethnic-Chinese Indonesians.